

CG Press Conference 26 August 2004 Q & A Transcription

- 1) **Q: Demush Zefiaj** “You actually are in Kosovo and have seen the actual state of Kosovo, many European analysts have given different opinions regarding the United States troops in Kosovo, and in Kosovo the opinions are very good. And the Opinion of the citizens is that these troops stay here longer. The standing status of the future of Kosovo in 2005, regarding this issue do you think that U.S. troops will stay here any longer depending on the final status?”

**A: BG Erlandson** “There was many questions rapped up into one. Regarding the state of Kosovo in my short time here, as I said in my opening statement, I believe that the people of Kosovo their municipal leadership and institutions are making positive progress. General Carmony and his soldiers have come in at the same strength that we came in six months ago. And as you know each nation makes and assessment, a threat assessment, about every six months and allocates troop strength against that threat assessment. The future status and the accomplishment of standards will be decided by the UN Security Council. And certainly I am not aware of any deadline that our nation has established as far as U.S. troops in Kosovo. What I do know and what I can share with you is that the 38<sup>th</sup> Division is here now for a period of six months and the division that is going to follow the 38<sup>th</sup> is already preparing.

- 2) **Q: Mr. General,** A few days ago there has been speculation on the Serbian media that in the future will be threats or attacks to KFOR or other organizations or even the civilian population. Are you aware of any threats and especially when KFOR the last five years they have waited for them with flowers?

**A: BG Erlandson** “I have read the same articles that you are referring to regarding speculation by the Serbian media regarding threats to KFOR and international agencies. And we have seen no indication within Multinational Brigade East on such threats. We see the AOR as characteristically stable and as of now are Intel shows us that there doesn’t appear to be serious threats against KFOR forces in Multinational Brigade East.”

- 3) **Q:** In your opening statement you mentioned during your patrols of criminal activity that you discovered, I am interested to know in which area of the border were these cases, how many cases and what were the materials that were smuggled?

**A:** On a daily basis we are conducting joint patrols with the KPS and UNMIK P, **and** although we are experiencing some or seeing some criminal activity within our AOR we see it as characteristically low when you compare it to other nations outside the province of Kosovo. The type of criminal activity that we are seeing in some cases it is vandalism, some cases it is theft and along the ABL there is smuggling going on. We are not seeing any increase in smuggling but we are working closely with the border control to interdict it. As far as the types of things

that are being smuggled I would encourage you to ask the question to the KPS as they are dealing with the types of contraband that are being found.

- 4) **Q: Igor Savic:** Social protests have been announced to take place in the month of September which is naturally understandable due to the harsh living conditions of the population that they live in. Are the KFOR troops ready to respond to any possible threats of violence and because certain groups might utilize these social protests to advance their causes?

**A: BG Erlandson:** Before I answer that question I must encourage you to invite General Carmony down to your T.V. station for an interview. In regards to the social protests that are being predicted for the month of September I will tell you that there are joint security plans in place with U.S. KFOR and General Carmony's Soldiers along with KPS and UNMIK P; and I will tell you that any time that we have projected protests where there may be large groups or large crowds we always remain vigilant in our observation and reconnaissance patrols monitoring the situation. And I can assure you that the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry division is highly trained and fully capable of handling the mission or any mission that they are asked to do here in Kosovo.

**BG Erlandson:** Awfully quiet group today. This is your last chance to ask me any questions. Okay if there are no further questions I would like to make one final statement. First and foremost I want to thank you for the respect you have shown me during these interviews. Freedom of the press is a very important right; but along with that right comes responsibility for accurate and factual reporting. You have certainly done that when you have interviewed with me and I appreciate you keeping it factual. And finally I would ask that you would pass, or give the same courtesy in respect to General Carmony as he continues are monthly press conferences. And Last I have one final message for the people of Kosovo; I have been impressed with the beautiful landscape of this province and the beautiful young people I have met during my time here. I believe that the future, long term future, of Kosovo lies in its youth. And I would challenge the adults of Kosovo, the parents of Kosovo and the municipal leaders both at the PISG level and local level to set the appropriate example for the young people of Kosovo. Thank you very much.